

Fire destroys Timp Cave visitors center

Officials still expect cave tours to begin as previously scheduled on May 4

2-4-91
By JOHN BEST

Herald Correspondent

TIMPANOGOS CAVE NATIONAL MONUMENT — Smoke filled American Fork Canyon as firefighters from two agencies battled to save the National Park's historic Timpanogos Cave Visitors Center early Sunday morning.

According to fire officials the fire was too far gone by the time help arrived, and the building was a total loss.

Fire alarms inside the visitors center were activated at 2:55 a.m. Sunday. Park personnel stationed in American Fork Canyon immediately called the Alpine City Fire Department. Alpine firefighters arrived shortly after 3 a.m. "When we arrived the building was engulfed in flames and smoke," said Alpine Fire Chief Craig Carlisle.

The Alpine Fire Department called Pleasant Grove for back up help and the two crews battled the blaze before finally controlling the fire. After 8 a.m. crews were dousing hot spots in the totally destroyed visitors center.

Mike Tranel, Chief Ranger for the Timpanogos Cave National

Monument said, "the lobby, the auditorium, the museum and offices of our visitor center are all destroyed." Tranel said major losses are the building, computers, and radio equipment. Displays in the museum were also destroyed. Tranel said, "Our major geological collections are in another building. The displays in the museum that were destroyed are not as valuable." The visitors center was constructed in 1965.

County Fire Marshal Tom Wroe was called to the scene along with the state fire marshal. Tranel says an inspector from the National Park Service will also investigate the blaze.

Wroe arrived early Sunday to begin his investigation. He concluded the cause to be an electrical fault. Heat tape used to melt ice along the southeast portion of the roof caused the extension cords to overheat and short, which ignited the combustible wood roof.

Wroe estimates the total dollar amount lost in the fire to reach \$500,000, including the building and its contents.

Tranel says cave tours were



The Timpanogos Cave Visitors Center was destroyed in a Sunday morning fire.

scheduled to begin this spring on May 4. "We still plan to be in operation by that day. We will have a temporary ticket booth, and probably no visitors center, but

tours will continue.

The rest rooms, snack bar and gift shop were separate from the main building joined only by a roof structure.

Delegation demands truck traffic banned from Provo Canyon

By JOSEPHINE ZIMMERMAN
Herald Staff Writer

SALT LAKE CITY — A delegation of more than 45 Utah County people, including five state legislators, told Gov. Norm Bangerter and other state officials Friday that they want non-destination truck traffic banned from Provo Canyon.

Julie Mack served as spokesman for the delegation, presenting resolutions in favor of the restrictions introduced in the 1990 Legislature by Reps. Byron L. Harward and John L. Valentine; City of Provo; City of Orem, Alpine School District; Provo School District; Utah County School District; Utah County Health Department; Utah County Travel Council and Utah County Commission.

Five state representatives

voicing support for the truck ban were Harward, Valentine, Rep. Jordan Tanner and state Sens. C.E. "Chuck" Peterson and LeRay McAllister.

Bangerter told the group that if there is a legal way to ban the trucks, it should be done.

Todd Weston, member of the Utah Transportation Commission, said this is not an isolated request.

He warned that if the State of Utah decided to ban trucks, it would open the door to a challenge by the Federal Highway Administration. He also warned that other areas of the state, like Davis County, would promptly make similar requests.

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TRAFFIC:

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"That's why it is a difficult decision for us to make, and we must make sure we make the right decision," he said. "Our job is to move traffic, but of course safety is a primary concern."

"We aren't dragging our feet, although you probably don't think that, although you probably don't think we are moving as fast as we should," he said. "The question is do we have the legal authority to say which trucks can use the canyon. It's boiling down to that issue."

Lt. Gov. Val Oveson declared, "I am continually bothered when you use the Federal Highway Administration as an excuse, when we should be challenging them."

Weston responded, "If you give us enough information to challenge them, we will be in better condition."

Oveson said a legal opinion is imperative.

Bud Scruggs, administrative assistant to the governor, said two approaches are needed: nailing down the legal aspects and making a checklist of what they must do to build a case for banning trucks.

Don Coleman, assistant Attorney General, said there are precedents in other jurisdictions where restrictions have been sustained. He said it is a significant legal issue, and he would need to know what type of restrictions were proposed, such as a total ban or priorities.

Dan Nelson, District 6 engineer for the Department of Transportation, told the group that construction will begin soon on widening University Avenue from 2200 North to the mouth of Provo Canyon, which is a project apart from the canyon highway improvement.

Several people in the delegation warned about re-routing canyon traffic through Edgemont (the old Provo Canyon road) during that work, since it is a residential area and is already extremely dangerous.

Mack and others expressed their frustrations with the process so far. Among the reasons they cited for wanting the truck ban were:

- The 1985 UDOT accident summary report showed Provo Canyon has three times more auto and truck accidents than acceptable standards allow, and 50 percent of the accidents involving trucks resulted in personal injury or death.
- A 300 percent increase in truck traffic is projected when the new canyon highway is completed.

- Four elementary schools, one middle school, and two high schools are within five blocks of University Avenue in Provo, and Orem has five elementary schools, two middle schools and two high schools, all of which have a total student population of 18,000. Many of these children travel on or cross these roads to and from school on a daily basis.

- The contribution from diesel-fueled trucks to PM10 pollution in Provo and Orem is relatively high and must be reduced.

Trucks in canyon targeted

After Utah County parents told him that trucks rolling through the streets of Provo and Orem are endangering their children, Gov. Norm Bangerter wants to know if the state can stop the trucks from using Provo Canyon as a shortcut between I-15 and I-80.

Within hours of the Friday meeting with a dozen representatives of the two communities, the governor put a letter requesting a formal legal opinion on the issue in the hands of Attorney General Paul Van Dam.

"I have directed the Utah State Transportation Commission to find a way to keep interstate traffic on the interstate system rather than Highway 189 through Provo Canyon," Bangerter's letter reads.

The attorney general is being asked if the state can restrict most of the truck traffic through Provo Canyon but allow trucks making deliveries in the Utah County area to continue to use the route.

Bud Scruggs, the governor's chief of staff, said he has witnessed their concerns firsthand while looking out a window at a restaurant that fronted University Avenue.

"I felt like I was at some Salt Palace monster truck event," Scruggs said.

New chief at Timp Cave rebuilding from scratch

■ **Park:** McGill says Feb. 3 fire is forcing officials to deal with traffic snarls.

By Jerry Spangler
Deseret News staff writer *6 July 1991*

TIMPANOGOS CAVE NATIONAL MONUMENT — Sue McGill has always loved parks. So much so she's spent much of her life bouncing from national parks in her native Washington to Hawaii to Utah to Kentucky to New Mexico, tasting the best America has to offer with its national park system.

"I'm the gypsy of my family," she laughs. "I wanted to see the world."

Nevertheless, the chance to "settle down" for a couple of years as a park superintendent in Utah was a dream come true. Even if it meant she had to build the park literally from the ground up.

The visitors center and administrative offices at Timpanogos Cave National Monument burned to the ground Feb. 3.

"I knew what I was getting into," said McGill, who left a job as chief of maintenance at Bryce Canyon in April to assume the superintendency at Timpanogos. "Some might see it as a deterrent, but the opportunity is what attracted me to the park."

Since April, when McGill was appointed superintendent, the rubble from the fire has been removed, a temporary visitors center installed and basic utilities restored — just in time for the summer

crush of tourists. Almost all visitors come between May and September.

If there's a silver lining to the fire, it's that the blaze is forcing the National Park Service to come up with a long-range plan to deal with the growing number of visitors, the highway congestion and how to satisfy the overall mission of the park.

"We're looking at a lot of different alternatives," she said, "including rebuilding on the current site or building a new visitors center at the mouth of the canyon. But we've got to come up with a plan to deal with the traffic congestion and pedestrian traffic on the highway."

The long-range plan will also deal with questions of restoration and interpretation of historic buildings, development of park opportunities besides the cave tours, and how to better interpret the caves for park visitors (there are no displays in the temporary structures).

"We're not going to build a per-

manent structure until we complete the planning process," McGill said. It's a planning process that will affect the future of Timpanogos Cave for the next 20 years or more.

Timpanogos was plagued with problems before the fire. The number of visitors at the monument long ago exceeded the capacity of the parking lot, forcing visitors to park alongside a busy highway. It isn't uncommon to see children darting among the highway traffic.

Also, the visitors center was too small to accommodate the more than 100,000 people who stop every year. Park officials actually turn away 6,000 to 7,000 people a year.

Any development to correct the overcrowding problem, including rebuilding the visitors center, will undoubtedly require congressional support. But until a long-range plan is in place, park officials have

not actively sought funding.

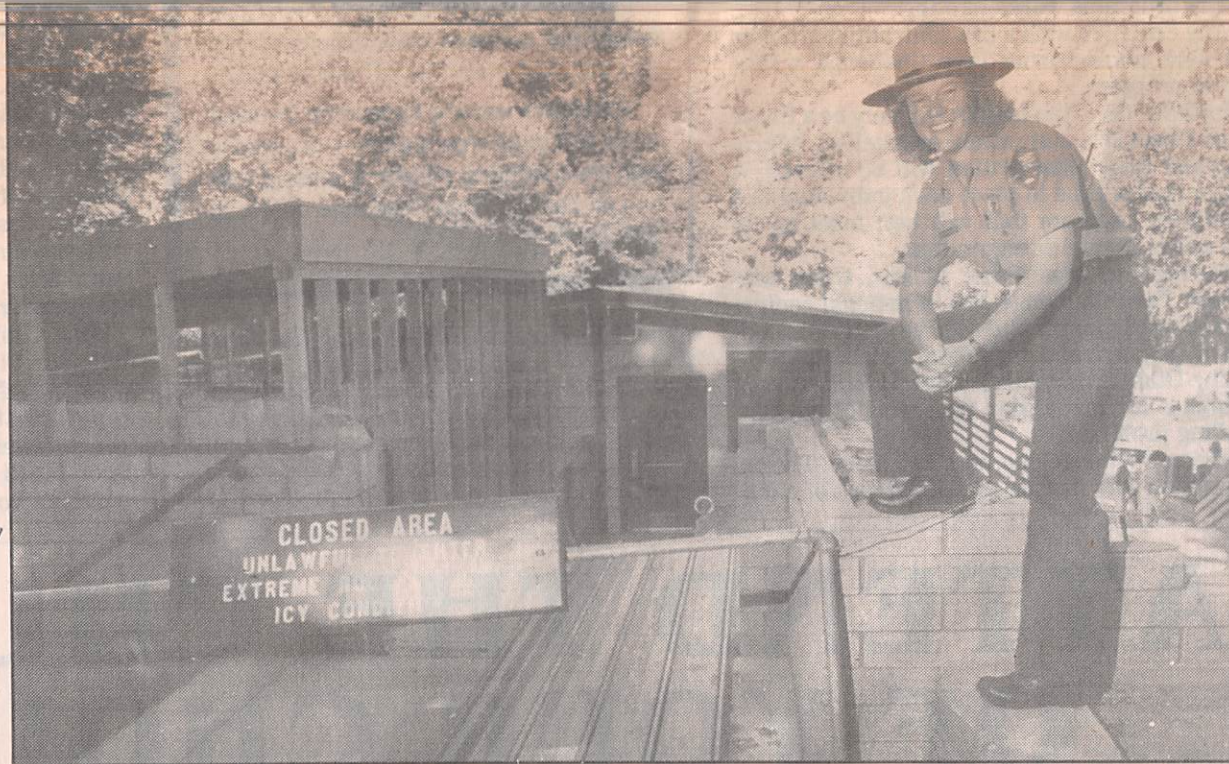
"We're competing for dollars with everything else in the national parks. Hopefully, we can make a good enough argument," she said.

Between 70,000 and 80,000 people go on cave tours every year, with another 40,000 or so people a year visiting the park without going on the tours. The park could handle more visitors if they came earlier in the day or earlier or later in the season.

But McGill is hesitant to encourage more park visits when temporary facilities are already so heavily taxed. It's a situation she hopes to remedy during her tenure.

But after two or three years, McGill says she will likely continue her gypsy lifestyle with the National Park Service. "But I'd like to leave it (Timpanogos) better than it looks now," she said.

"If there is no permanent facility in place, I'd at least like to see the plans in place and ready to move ahead."



PHOTOGRAPHY/ GARRY BRYANT

Susan McGill stands by burned-down Timpanogos center. New temporary building is in back.

Continued from B1
CAVE

Cave National Monument, Route 3, Box 200, American Fork, UT 84003-9806.

Tours begin every 20 minutes from 7 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The picnic area is open from 7 a.m. until sunset. After May 17, park hours will be extended to 5:30 p.m.

Tours cost \$5 for adults, \$4 for children ages 6 to 15 and are free for children under 6. Senior citizens with a Golden Age Passport can get in for \$2.50.

Although the temperature outside the cave is warm, the temperature inside is around 43 degrees. McGill suggests visitors bring a sweat shirt or light jacket.

Strollers, wheelchairs and other wheeled vehicles are not permitted. The monument is located on U-92 about two miles up American Fork Canyon. For more information, call the visitor center at 756-5238.

Timpanogos Information

Recreational Opportun-ities

To reach Timpanogos Cave, visitors must hike a 1.5-mile/2.5 km cave trail. This hard surfaced trail is considered a strenuous hike and should not be attempted by anyone with heart trouble, walking or breathing problems. No strollers or other wheeled vehicles allowed. No pets please. Allow three hours for the round trip. Guided tours through three interconnected caverns are provided by National Park Service rangers. Reservations for the guided tour of the cave must be made at the visitor center. There is a picnic area .25 mile/.4 km west of the visitor center. It has 16 sites, grills, water and restrooms. A snack bar and gift shop are located west of the visitor center.

Visitor Center

The visitor center is located at the base of the cave trailhead and is open from May 27 to September 5.

Season/Fee

The cave is open from May 27 to September 5. The fee for adults is \$5, children, \$4, and senior citizens with Golden Age pass, \$2.50. On Saturdays and holidays, early arrival is recommended.

Weather Average

Average temperature in the cave is 43 degrees Fahrenheit/6 degrees Celsius. The average daily temperature outside the cave during the summer is 85 degrees Fahrenheit/29.4 degrees Celsius.

Contact

Superintendent, Timpanogos Cave
National Monument, Route 3, Box 200,
American Fork, UT 84003, (801) 756-5238.

Wave 1996



Photo courtesy of Doug Hansen

Utah Power employees, from left, Craig Pierce and Steve Johnson snowshoe their way along the edge of a cliff headed to Timpanogos Cave.

Power restored to Timpanogos Cave

1-20-93
By PAT CHRISTIAN
Herald Staff Writer

AMERICAN FORK — Linemen from Utah Power have restored electrical power to the cave at Timpanogos Cave National Monument in American Fork Canyon.

Guided by three mountaineers, linemen hiked through heavy snow Saturday to an area near a cave entrance to repair an electrical line disabled by a tree heavily laden with snow. The power had been knocked out since the Christmas holidays.

UP&L lineman Jay Hansen said his crew had been scheduled to hike to the cave several days before, but the winter snowstorms and threat of avalanche led to a decision to hold off.

An earlier attempt to reach the cave had also been turned back by avalanches. After that first attempt, UP&L took steps to employ professional mountaineers on the team to restore power.

The concern of restoring electrical power was that electrical pumps that manage potentially-damaging water accumulation could only be off for a short duration before damage might be done.

Cave monitoring instruments were also shut down with the accompanying loss of data, and the

threat of damage from rising water.

On Saturday, crews decided the risk of avalanche was acceptable, so they made the bid to reach the downed line.

Hansen and linemen Steve Johnson, Craig Pierce and Randy Beckstead hiked in on snowshoes. They were led by professional mountaineers Doug Hansen, Keith Hadley and Greg Allred, who traveled on skis.

Lineman Larry Walker remained at the monument visitor's center, in contact with the crew. He energized the line once it was repaired.

Jay Hansen said the group carried 600 feet of copper wire to replace the downed section of line as well as other equipment.

"We were carrying between 40 and 50 pounds each," he said.

The line was down between two power poles, and members of the group working at one pole had to use safety ropes to work their way down a rock ledge.

Doug Hansen said he equipped each member of the group with radio transceivers used to locate victims buried in avalanches. He said one lineman working on a pole near the cave was repeatedly shocked by static electricity transmitted over the length of the cop-

per wire from the visitors center to the cave.

Hansen said he was concerned about avalanches later that day as

Budget woes affect cave

By PAT CHRISTIAN
Herald Staff Writer

AMERICAN FORK — Federal belt tightening within the National Park Service will affect Utah student field trips to Timpanogos Cave National Monument.

Monument superintendent Susan McGill announced this week that visitors to the popular tourist cave will see a reduced operating season and reduced hours of operations for both the cave and visitor center.

She said the changes are being made to adjust to reductions in operating budgets nationally throughout the National Park Service.

McGill said normally the caves are open from mid-May to mid-October, and in days when the cave is open and public schools are still in session, many field trips are conducted to the caves.

The cave opening is scheduled for May 26, and cave closing on Sept. 7 will affect public school students.

McGill said between May 8 and

the group returned while rain fell, but they never encountered an active avalanche. "All of us returned soaking wet," Hansen said.

Memorial Day, while public schools are still in session, student tours are limited to 80 students a day five days a week and are usually full.

She said in the summer, when only year-round public school programs are operating or other special public education programs, student tours are limited to 180 students per week.

Alpine School District for example, geographically the closest Utah School District to the national monument, lets out for the summer on May 27 and starts a new school year on Aug. 25. That would leave few days for field trips to the caves for most students.

"We have tried to limit the impact on the visitors as well as the resource to the greatest extent possible," McGill said.

"The bulk of our visitors arrive during the summer months and reductions at either end of the season allow us to continue to meet the demand of most visitors to the area."

Cross country crossing



Lexie Rowley, Provo, left, and Janelle Roach, Provo, lead a group of students across the track during a Utah Valley

31 JAN 1993

Community College outdoor recreation class activity Tuesday at Aspen Grove on the Alpine Loop. The physical education

class, taught by Clay Chivers, includes rappelling, night skiing, rock climbing and snow biking.

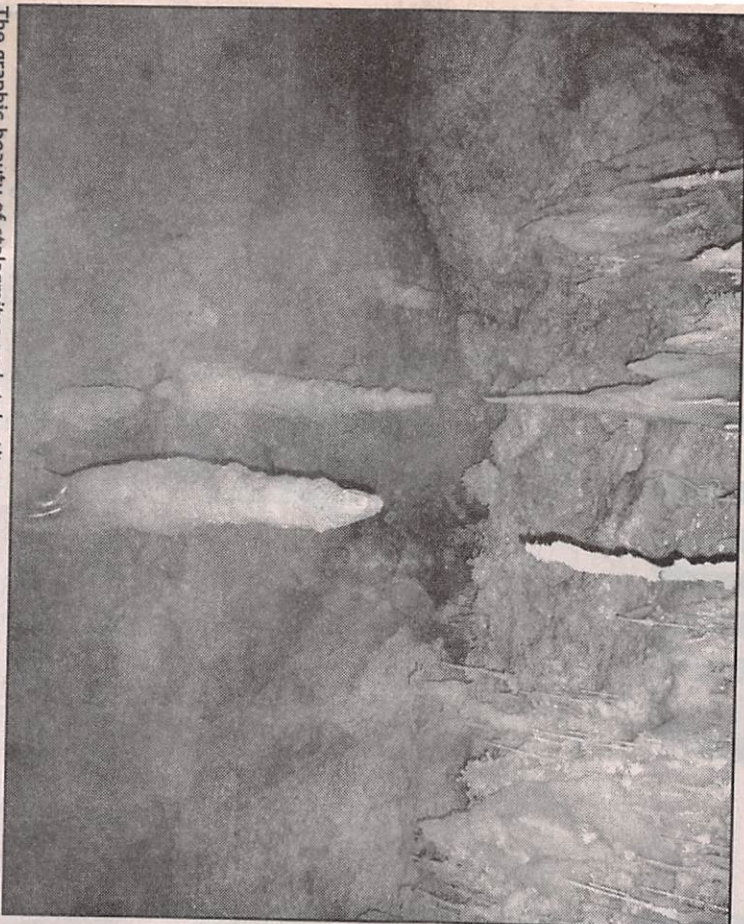
Herald Photo/Jennifer Grigg

OUTDOOR WEEKLY



Timpanogos Cave

Heber Valley's Back Yard National Monument



The graphic beauty of stalagmites and stalactites

Martin L. Van Roosendaal II

Courier Staff

Have you ever wondered what helictites are? What about stalactites, stalagmites, and flowstone?

If you are interested in what these are, you must visit Timpanogos cave national monument in American Fork Canyon.

High above the canyon floor and millions of years ago, Timpanogos cave began forming and cultivating fabulous geological wonders. Water, the key element to forming caves, has been dripping and running through cracks and faults that have opened to the outside. As the water flows over the rocks, it deposits minerals, like calcite, that form smooth and often transparent rock formations. The water that drips from the ceilings produce many different formations that resemble icicles.

"The cave...it is a wilderness. An underground wilderness waiting to be explored," said Liza Barratt, a three year tour guide at Timpanogos cave.


To understand the intensity of the formations requires a visit to the cave. It is open daily from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. from May through October. The best times

talk to the rangers and view a video about the cave. The more you know about it, the better the experience.

When Martin Hansen discovered the cave in 1887, there was no trail. He was chopping firewood when he found cougar tracks, so, out of curiosity, he followed them and discovered the first part of the Timpanogos cave system.

At the time he did not have equipment to explore what he had found, so he later returned and explored the cave, then took people on tours to see it's wonders. When the word was spread about his discovery, many people like fortune hunters, mining companies, treasure hunters, and museums invaded the site and took many precious formations.

In 1922 president Warren G. Harding established the cave as a National Monument. This provided protection from looters that had misused the cave. It is now a national treasure that families can enjoy.

For more information about the cave and tour times call (801) 756-5238. 

Timpanogos Cave

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